

“Curiosity” and SG Connection

I. Definitions.

- A. “Curiosity” is the active, intentional disposition to _____investigate, know, and understand someone or something that is obscure, hidden and/or partially unknown.
- B. And so, here’s the “Big Idea” – Small groups must be **intentional** about helping one another to grow an **insatiable** curiosity to know _____, their own selves, and other group members.
 - 1. Low-impact small groups are marked by _____ level, “layer to layer” relating and surface level curiosity.
 - 2. Life-changing small groups are Spirit-alive communities where people can:
 - Know and Be Known
 - Love and be Loved
 - Serve and be Served
 - Celebrate and be Celebrated
- C. God’s vision for community can be seen in 3 important texts of Scripture:
 - 1. First – Jesus prayed for His followers to experience a Trinity-like community in John 17:20-23.

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

2. Second - The Acts 2:42-47 church is a reflection of this kind of community.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

3. Third - The mandate for being a curious community is in Heb. 10:24-25.

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- II. High-impact small groups are communities where group members are **WORKING** at developing 3 kinds of "Curiosity":
 - A. "God -Curiosity" is the Holy Spirit-driven passion to **know** God for His glory.
 1. Philippians 3:9-11.

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

2. 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

3. Two Summary Statements:

- a. If you lack “God-Curiosity” you’ll **NOT** have any significant “Self-Curiosity” or “People Curiosity.”
- b. A symptom that we have “God-Curiosity” is when we **can’t** get enough of the Bible!

B. “ME-Curiosity” (or Personal-Curiosity) is the on-going commitment to investigate whatever is “going on” in one’s interior world, **especially** in the context of relationships.

Why? Because you **CARE** about holiness and **WANT** to become more like Jesus.

1. Matthew 7:3-5

³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own

eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

2. Proverbs 20:27

**²⁷ The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD,
searching all his innermost parts.**

3. Proverbs 20:5

**⁵ The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water,
but a man of understanding will draw it out.**

4. Psalm 139:23-24

**²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!**

**²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!**

C. "OTHERS -Curiosity" is the intentional practice of actively (with good boundaries, good manners, love; paying close attention to the other two types of curiosity) exploring someone as a spiritual, emotional, volitional, rational, and personal being who is...

1. Made in the image of God.

2. Marred by Sin. As C.S. Lewis said, "We are all glorious ruins."

3. And is being Remade (if they are a believer) into the image of Christ.

This is the place we want to focus on the most:

a. What evidences do I see of the "good" in someone as a result of them being a "new creation" in Christ?

b. Where is the Holy Spirit working in this person to move them to follow Jesus and to display the fruits of the Spirit?

c. What is getting in the way of them more beautifully reflecting the glory and image of Christ in their PRVE as they relate with others?

D. Follow this thinking:

1. God created man in His own image for the purpose of **glorifying** Him (Isaiah 43:7).

⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

2. And since God is **totally** committed to His own glory, He hungers for us to know Him and to glorify Him in **all** that we say, think, and do.

Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 10:31, **“³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”**

3. Therefore, as we **grow** in our relationship with God, and as we increasingly desire to set His glory on display in our lives, the **more** that we will **see** ourselves.

But since we’re **“fallen”** image bearers, the more that we see ourselves, the more that we’ll be driven to either **know** God more, or to **hide** from His presence.

Lk. 5:8 – “Depart from me, oh Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

Mark 9:5 – Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration.

John 18:1-6 – Soldiers fall before Jesus.

Acts 26 – Paul’s account of his conversion.

- a. And so, the **point** is that as we’re curious about God (as evidenced by disciplining ourself to study the Bible, acquire tools to study the Bible, like systematic theology), we’ll **hopefully** become more curious about ourselves.
- b. And as we’re curious about ourselves, God’s Spirit will convict us of sin, and **move** us to want to **know** Him and **glorify** Him – our highest good.

Point – We will CARE about anything in our life that is getting in the way of us becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Job 42:1-6

Then Job answered the LORD and said:

**²“I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
⁴‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’
⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”**

4. Two quotes by Larry Crabb:

“Only a vision of God’s beauty allows us to recognize the true essence of human corruption: to turn away from everything good to lesser gods that we wrongly and sinfully believe are greater.”

“When we see the true picture of human corruption, we will neither explain it psychologically, treat it therapeutically, or excuse it sociologically. Instead, we will cry out, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me a sinner.’” (Luke 18:9-14)

III. Spiritual Warfare and Holy Spirit-driven Curiosity.

Consider this statement: Satan **despises** any Christ follower’s Holy Spirit-driven curiosity!

A. Here’s what I mean: Since knowing God and knowing ourselves (Prov. 20:27; 1 Cor. 2:10-12), is part of God’s plan to glorify Him, and recognizing that Spirit-driven curiosity is **central** to that plan, Evil does **everything** he can to keep that from happening.

1. In other words, Evil despises **any** expression of curiosity that glorifies God!

- a. First - Evil **does** not want us to know (or be curious about) God.
- b. Second - Evil **does** not want us to know (or be curious about) ourselves.

Note - This is one of the dangers of simplicity. Simple books, simple stories (TV or novels), simple pleasures, crude conversations, and clinging to what's intellectually simple or "familiar" can inure, or **dull our minds** to such an extent that Spirit-driven curiosity about relationships, ourselves, the Bible, or God (really, anything that tends toward complexity) is avoided at all costs.

- c. Third - Evil does **not** want us to know or be curious about one another. (This is another reason why Evil hates Spirit-Alive community.)
 - d. Instead - Evil wants us to **cling** to shame, simplicity, hiding, inaccurate thinking, ignorance of the Bible and theology, and self-protection.
2. Our **fleshly** response to Evil's efforts to **extinguish** our curiosity is to "push back" against the Holy Spirit's work in our life on at least 3 fronts:
- a. First Front - Curiosity about ourselves (Apart from the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the grace of God, and a maturing spiritual community) can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, discomfort, anxiety, and feeling a loss of control).
 - b. Second Front - Curiosity about other image-bearers
 - "What's the use, it's too confusing, too messy, and I have nothing to offer."
 - "Don't people just need to listen to the Bible, obey God, go to church, and follow Jesus? What can I do that's better than what God does or has already done?"

- c. Third Front – Curiosity about God and the Bible. (Note – Since the Word of God does what Heb. 4:12-13 says that it does, if we really want to **avoid** understanding ourselves and other image-bearers, then we've **got** to avoid the Bible!")

[Note- The opposite of this statement is also true!]

"If we really want to **understand** what's going on with ourselves and other image-bearers, then we simply **must** come to the Bible! This is non-negotiable!

"¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account."

- B. The "Big Idea" for Spirit-alive community builders here is that a lack of curiosity is **not** symptomatic of an absence of skill, intelligence, or family or cultural background. Rather, it's likely an evidence of one's unconscious (or conscious) struggle to "settle for less" and to "do life" from a place self-protective strategies.

1. Therefore, to whatever extent this is true, it must **also** be true that we (either consciously or unconsciously) "staying safe" **more** than we value community with others.

1 John 4:18-19 - **¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us.**

2. Because of our likely shame-based commitment to "stay safe," we (either consciously or unconsciously) try to **suppress** or ignore being curious (by staying quiet and not asking anyone questions) as a part of our self-centered strategy to keep our "settled for" comfort level undisturbed and unchallenged.

3. But Spirit-Alive community (a place where people walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh) is the milieu (the experiential and social context) where image-bearers can experience the strategies of Evil defeated at the cross of Jesus Christ.

Gal. 5:16-18 - **¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

IV. "Tools" for Practicing Curiosity in Small Groups.

A. Put on 2 pairs of "eyeglasses:

1. Deep Longings and Wrong Strategies.
2. Dignity and Depravity.

B. Have a "Trinity" and Spiritual Formation Vision.

a. For your group as a whole.

"Here's what it might look like for us to relate with one another like the Trinity."

b. For Each Person in Your Group.

"Here's would it might look like for _____ to be more like Jesus.

C. Focus on the "Twin Icebergs of Curiosity."

Truth

Grace

D. Cultivate an Awareness of Your "Deep Longings."

1. The example of Moses in Exodus 33:12-23.

¹² Moses said to the LORD, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

¹⁴ And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." ²¹ And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

2. The Example of David in Psalm 27:1-5.

V. For Your Table:

- A. Team up with one person at your table. Take turns verbally identifying one or more evidences that you see in them of Jesus Christ CHANGING them from the inside-out.

1. Do not ask the other person for help. Identify what you see in them all on your own.

2. Take turns. One person speaks at a time. The other listens. Then switch.
 3. Tune in to how you feel as your partner speaks to you. Describe that feeling or emotion? I felt _____ when I heard you say _____ because _____
 4. Tune in to your own level of comfort or discomfort during this exercise. Don't try to be funny. Instead, be curious and honest about what was going on with you. Then tell the other person.
- B. Team up with someone at your table and each of you write a "vision statement" for one another that identifies how you see them "growing in Christ." This will take several sentences to complete. Share and explain to them what you wrote and why.